

Journey of Searching Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time/A July 30, 2017
10:00 AM 1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Rom 8:28-30; **Mt 13:44-52** (Finding the buried treasure is/or the pearl of great price refers actually to experiencing the wonder, the beauty, the goodness, and the love that is our very nature created in the image and likeness of God.)

Judea at the time of Christ had been overrun by many armies and **people would hide their valuables in a field to retrieve later** when the armies were gone, only as you know in war people don't always return. **So Judea was full of buried treasure that people went in search of.** The law said **the treasure belongs to the owner of the field**, not to the one who discovers it. It wasn't "finders keepers." So this is the background of this parable of the treasure in the field.

But the treasure Jesus is talking about is not a thing. It's not gold or silver, but rather he is talking about the discovery of the true self. Now St. Paul talked about carrying a treasure in an earthen vessel. The earthen vessel was his body obviously, the treasure himself. We forget that **we are made in the image and likeness of God.** We grow up in an ignorant world and we are unaware of our actual identity. St. Augustine called this original sin; it's not a very good term. But we have to be saved from this ignorance because **within each of us there is splendor, beauty, loveliness, and sweetness because we are all reflections of a God who is all those things, and we can't be different.**

So from early on, being ignorant of our own inner goodness, we make up something. We sense there's something wrong; I believe all of us when we are young do sense something missing. We may blame ourselves or we may blame our parents or we may blame someone else, but we know there's something missing in our lives. So **in our absence of true self-knowledge we make do with whatever we can, but it's never really enough and it's never satisfying.**

Now we could work all this out if we lived in a different kind of culture. We could grow spiritually, but unfortunately **our culture is one that is full of all kinds of distractions, an**

endless barrage of activities, forms of entertainment and amusements, all of them legitimate to a point, but **we experience a solid stream that never ends**. A lot of us are not good at turning it off and being quiet so that God can teach us who we really are. In fact **we may be afraid of being silent or quiet**. All of this is really a form of avoiding pain, the pain that we experience deep inside of us as loss.

The point of the parable is that **we can find this great treasure. We can find the pearl of great price that we are, that is within us; but we have to search**. That's what the journey is about, "journey" being the primary biblical metaphor for life. Life is a journey. **It's a journey of searching**. For whatever reason, God's magnificent creation has been, in St. Paul's words, "subjected to futility." When we try to live our lives on our own, using only the physical senses as a guide, they become futile. **All religious people know there's more, but often don't experience it because we don't take religion itself that seriously**. Oh we try to keep the commandments, pray occasionally, go to church occasionally, but this will not help us to the goal, which is finding the treasure. Well it might help us, but it won't accomplish it all by itself.

Finding the buried treasure or the pearl of great price refers actually to **experiencing the wonder, the beauty, the goodness, and the love that is our very nature created in the image and likeness of God**. Once this happens everything else becomes relative. That's why he says, "When someone finds the treasure, they sell everything to buy the field." Nothing is more important. "When the merchant finds the pearl, he sells everything else to buy the pearl." That's not very good economics, but it's the way it is in reality. **When we discover what we are really about, nothing else matters. So this is the goal of the kingdom** and the kingdom is about those who are searching, and **we can find and we can help each other find**. It is a treasure certainly worth searching for.